

[W. T. Padgett]

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Range-lore

Annie McAulay

Maverick, Texas

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RANGE-LORE

W. T. Padgett was born in Coryell County Texas, June 25, 1859. He moved to Runnels County in 1889 and settled on a ranch on Valley Creek, a few miles northwest of Ballinger.

Mr. Padgett says: "My father was a millright before he become interested in stock raising. He started ranching in Coryell County where I was born. A little later he moved to McClennan County, where he operated a pretty big stock ranch. We lived in Waco during the Civil War. My father raised horses as well as cattle. He always had three or four hundred head of horses on his ranch.

"I began riding when about ten years old. There was always plenty of wild horses, and so after a few years, I learned to ride the meanest of 'em. I really enjoyed it, I guess. I thought it a pack of fun then. I always helped to break my C.12 [???] 2 fathers father's horses. But of course that wasn't all I did, and I never rode for money. It was all open range country then and our cattle would drift plum down as far as Little River and other streams. We tried to sort of keep up with the herd as there were cattle thieves them days.

"We always had two big round-ups a year, one in the spring and one in the fall of the year. Here is the way we'd do it. We , with other neighboring ranchers would round up all

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the herds, not all at the same time but we'd take one small section at the time, round up everything in that part, brand the calves and cut out what we wanted to sell, hold them, and when we were through, turn the others loose. We usually rounded up several hundred at a time. They'd have a range boss, then there'd be all the ranch bosses, most of their cowhands, and as many cooks and horse wranglers as was needed. Sometimes there'd be a hundred or more men in the whole outfit.

"I remember one trip my father and me made. It was worse than any cattle drive I was ever on. It was sometime in the early seventies. We took sixty-five saddle horses to Arkansas to sell. We had to watch our horses mighty close on account of Indians. They wasn't on the warpath then but they would sure steal horses if they got a chance.

"I had to ride nearly every one of them horses. Some of 'em had been ridden one or two times and some of 'em not a-tall. You see they was saddle horses and when we'd sell one we'd have to ride him for the buyer before he'd take him. I was sure glad when we had sold the last ones and turned our faces toward home.

"The women didn't ride much in McClennan County, except on a side saddle and they had to be helped on then.

"There was a ranch woman in Posque County, aunt Liza McFall, that had several girls, and they could ride outlaw horses or anything. She didn't have a cowboy on the ranch that could beat 'em ridin' broncs, or working cattle either.

"I still remember the Indians. My father said he'd helped to chase lots of the Redskins but never killed one.

"When father and mother married, they went from Coryell to Comanche County on their bridal tour. They rode mules rather than horses because, as my father said, a mule could smell an Indian for miles. And that helped to make the trip safer.

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"I can remember when the Indians would try to steal the stock, especially horses from the settlers. When I was about twelve years old some Indians made a raid on a ranch in Bosque County, not so many miles from us. The owner caught them stealing and tried to stop them but they killed him. Some of the white settlers nearby took in after the Redskins, and shot one. The other Indians were so frightened or surprised that they went off and left the dead one where he fell and never did come back for him. I guess they must've give 'em a real scare that time.

"In 1889 I moved with my wife, a few belongings and three 4 hundred and fifty head of cattle to Runnels County. We settled on Valley Creek a few miles west of Runnels City. We had a heck of a time moving to Runnels. It rained on us all the way. It had been dry I think, but it was sure plenty wet that spring.

"The county up and down Oak and Valley Creeks was all mostly open range then. In 1890 we had a big round-up, or I should say, round-ups. There were three- one near the Wylie ranch and the river, one further north near where Norton now is, and the last on Valley Creek three or four miles south of Wingate.

"We had some drouths to contend with after I came to Runnels. In 1892 many of the ranchers were forced to seek water and grass elsewhere. I moved my cattle south, down near Fort McKavett. It was move or let 'em starve. I've seen good times and hard times, I've had my ups and downs of course. I had an up and a down too last year. I climbed a tree to thrash some pecans on my place, and fell down out of it all the way to the ground, crippling myself for life, and I'm almost helpless now. But I console myself that I had already lived and enjoyed a long and active life." Range-lore

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

W. T. Padgett, Ballinger, Texas, interviewed March 15, 1938.